Activist Musicianship, Sound, the 'Other Campaign' and the Limits of Public Space in Mexico City

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Abstract: This article explores the interplay between different understandings of music-making in political-cultural events held by pro-Zapatista, left-wing 'Other Campaign' activist groups in public spaces across Mexico City. It argues that, while these groups aimed to use music at such events to disseminate political messages and narratives to varied publics, their use of music as a sonic force was also geared towards the effective occupation of public parks and squares, claiming in practice what Henri Lefebvre characterises as the right to urban space. Nonetheless, in the course of such activity, contradictions emerged between sonic and textual conceptualisations of these musical activities which complicated notions of rights that these activist groups often invoked.

Keywords: Music; Space; Activism; Politics; Zapatismo; Mexico

In January 1994, a group of mostly indigenous rebels calling themselves the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) launched an uprising in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico, invading a number of cities before a government counterinsurgency drive forced them into the

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countryside. Protesting against the government's turn towards neoliberal economic policies, the EZLN agreed to an offensive ceasefire and created a new system of governance on the rural territory it had claimed. These events also had effects outside Chiapas. In the wake of the uprising, the growing movement of pro-Zapatista solidarity in Mexico City intersected with a boom in commercial rock, a genre which had emerged from a history of repression during the 1960s and 1970s to claim increasing public visibility (Paredes Pacho and Blanc 2010; Zolov 1999: 152-4). Anaya (1999) and Coutiño Soriano (2014) demonstrate that Zapatismo became an ideological locus of a great variety of activities connected with the 1990s boom in Mexican rock. During this time, rock musicians' ongoing struggle for urban space became linked to the emerging pro-Zapatista protest movement. On 19 February 1995, a local government-sponsored open-air concert with rock group Caifanes, in a plaza in north Mexico City, ended in riots, police repression and 'hundreds of people arrested or injured'.[1] In response, the Mexico City government prohibited open-air concerts (Paredes Pacho and Blanc 2010: 454). Rock musicians reacted swiftly, organising an open-air rock concert (entitled 'The First Rock Festival for Peace and Tolerance') featuring a number of prominent bands to take place a week after Caifanes' concert. As well as responding to a recent Army ambush conducted against the Zapatistas in Chiapas, this concert was intended to assert the right for rock concerts to be held in 'open-air' public space in Mexico City. One of the event's organisers, Santa Sabina songwriter Adriana Díaz Enciso, described the event as:

[1] The cause of the violence remains unclear. Rock musicians and activists tended to blame the organisers of this event for mismanagement; the authorities, meanwhile, were more likely to blame rock musicians and the fans attending this event (Paredes Pacho and Blanc 2010: 454-5).

> a demonstration of the renewed and powerful strength of the youth. It was a festive and brightly-coloured response to the macabre military actions of the 9th of February, and also to the derisory prohibition of the unheard-of ruling of the Mexico City [government] on mass open-air concerts. About fifteen thousand young people attended the concert, which was free from what is referred to with the word 'violence', and instead, a collection was made of several thousand pesos and tons of food to support the indigenous communities of Chiapas that were devastated by the Mexican army. (Anaya 1999: 24)

The Festival's organisers soon arranged a follow-up event for 18 May 1995, called 12 Serpiente, which featured performances by twenty artists and attracted an audience of about 30,000 people (Anaya 1999: 25).[2] These events were only two among many pro-Zapatista concerts arranged in Mexico City in the few years after 1994. Typically, such concerts were held in defiance of local government, as activist groups refused to request a permit (in part because they presumed such a request would be denied), and organisers would tend to collect food and clothes, rather than money, to send to Zapatista communities. Some of the goals of this city-based movement were achieved when the leftist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) was elected to the Mexico City government in 1997, which repealed the ban on open-air concerts, opened up public spaces to be used for cultural events, and assimilated some of the organisers of pro-Zapatista concerts into the ranks of local government (Nivón Bolán 2000; Prud'homme 2003).[3]

[2] See Paredes Pacho and Blanc (2010: 455) for a list of the artists that participated in 12 Serpiente.

[3] Interview, Adriana Díaz Enciso, 4 February 2015. The PRD had been sympathetic towards the EZLN and the pro-Zapatista solidarity movement in the 1990s, but this relationship deteriorated rapidly in the 2000s, especially as the EZLN hardened its stance towards electoral politics in general.

From this brief description, one may highlight two related themes at play in the 1990s pro-Zapatista rock scene. The first is the use of music as a means of providing support to Zapatista communities, in this case by sending economic and material resources recouped at concerts. The second theme has to do with music and sound as a means of asserting a right to occupy space. In organising an open-air concert in response to a government ban, these musicians and activists worked on the basis not only that such 'rights' could be established through events oriented around sonic practice, but that, indeed, 'there didn't seem to be any other way' to claim them (Adriana Díaz Enciso, p. c., 12 July 2016). This theme points towards music and sound as a locus of division, conflict and danger. It is notable that Díaz Enciso (above) highlights the lack of violence at the First Rock Festival for Peace and Tolerance, especially given the fact that this event was the response to a ban introduced in the wake of an outbreak of violence at a concert. In fact, in the interview cited above, Díaz Enciso suggested to me that violence was an ongoing preoccupation for the organisers of pro-Zapatista rock concerts at this time, describing the broad lack of repression at such events as a 'miracle'.

There were, then, a number of issues regarding space, sound, law and governance at play in the pro-Zapatista rock scene of the 1990s that intersected with a practice of claiming the right to perform in public space. During my research with pro-Zapatista activist groups in Mexico City in 2012 and 2013, similar tendencies emerged: these groups, like their predecessors, often claimed public squares and parks for the dissemination of pro-Zapatista messages while asserting a 'right' to use this space, something which occasionally led to conflict. In the course of such activities, a series of issues arose regarding these groups' relationship to public spaces, the ways that they manoeuvred to occupy them, and the role that the goal of communicating political messages played in these settings. In turn, the discourse of rights these groups deployed to

narrate and support their access to this urban space recalled debates concerning the ‘right to the city’ whose foundational figure is French sociologist Henri Lefebvre.

Lefebvre’s vision of space reflects not the scientific certainty that characterised the geographical methods of the early- and mid-twentieth century, but rather a continuous process of social negotiation and competition (1991: 1–4). Social space, he argues, is lived through the spatial practices of bodies, represented by maps and charts, and conceived through artistic, symbolic and descriptive practice (ibid.: 38–41). For Lefebvre, urban spaces, as sites in which power is concentrated and bodies are controlled, offer unprecedented opportunities for revolutionary change (2003: 8–16). In highlighting ways that the construction of space may be geared towards oppressive ends, Lefebvre ‘stresses the need to restructure the power relations that underlie the production of urban space’ (Purcell 2002: 101). The goal, as Lefebvre (1996: 157-9) declares, and Harvey (2012) and Marcuse (2009) reiterate, is that the inhabitants of urban space claim the right to appropriate and playfully recreate it: the right to the city ‘gathers the interests...of the whole society and firstly of all those who *inhabit*’ (Lefebvre 1996: 158, italics in original). In recent decades, this ‘right’ has been repeatedly invoked by participants in urban social movements, from *autonomistas* (autonomous, self-managed or self-organised groups) occupying social centres in Italy to squatters in Spain and the Occupy movement that spread from New York to a great many cities worldwide (Graeber 2013; Martínez 2007; Montagna 2006).

The ‘right to the city’ literature thus straddles theory and practice (Harvey 2012: 120; Marcuse 2009: 186). Optimism concerning the potential for social change stems from the notion that transforming urban space may consist of changes in the ways that it is used and understood (Lefebvre 1991: 245; Purcell 2002: 102). For Lefebvre, power in modern cities functions around

what he calls ‘abstract space’, which tends to produce ‘homogeneity’ as well as social distance between its occupants (1991: 51, 56). The contradiction of such abstract space is that it imposes ‘a non-aggression pact’ or ‘communality’ about its usage which is, in turn, backed up by force (*ibid*.: 56); thus, it balances ‘the appearance of security [with] the constant threat, and indeed the occasional eruption, of violence’ (*ibid*.: 57). It is particularly notable that, for Lefebvre, abstract space is the historical product of violence against the non-visual senses (*ibid*.: 284-6). Citing McLuhan (1962), Lefebvre contends that ‘[t]hat which is merely seen is reduced to an image – and to an icy coldness’ (1991: 286). Lefebvre, then, connects the construction of public ‘abstract space’ to the dominance of ‘the eye’—which tends ‘to reduce objects to the distance, to render them passive’—and to the conquest of space by the modern state (286–8). By contrast, he contends that eighteenth-century (European) society was structured by a body-centred and musical version of social space (1991: 284). Lefebvre’s writings on space thus raise many questions concerning the spatial possibilities associated with the production of music and sound; for the sociologist, ‘[t]he city is heard as much as music as it is read as a discursive writing’ (1996: 109; see also, Lefebvre 2004).

Recently, a number of ethnomusicologists and musicologists have built upon the Lefebvrian notion of socially produced space, discussing the ways in which urban social space may be produced and constructed through music (Baker 2006; Bywater 2007; Cohen 1995; Krims 2007; Smith 2000). Baker highlights the ways that Afro-Cubans in Havana, Cuba use rap as ‘a particularly appropriate vehicle not just for occupying space but also for constituting social relations within the spaces that its practitioners have claimed’ (2006: 224), and forming a ‘communicative arena’ in which discussion, debate and deliberation may occur (ibid.: 223, 226). Several recent studies in music, sound and space, however, have complicated Lefebvre’s

idealised portrayal of the aural field. Johnson and Cloonan, for instance, set out to challenge a 'pervasive and tacit assumption' about the therapeutic and beneficial effects of popular music, highlighting how sound and music can be 'appropriated by mutually contesting power blocs' to exert violence against particular groups (2008: 1, 4). Music, for Johnson and Cloonan, is a morally ambivalent social force; thus, the pair state that '[e]very time music is used to demarcate the territory of self or community, it is incipiently being used to invade, marginalize or obliterate that of other individuals or groups' (*ibid*.: 4). Elsewhere, Goodman examines 'sound as force', and the use of 'acoustic machines' to 'modulate the physical, affective, and libidinal dynamics of populations, of bodies, of crowds' as part of strategies of 'sonic warfare' (2010: 10). Goodman defines two types of 'audiosocial' forces which are key for the exertion of spatial control through sound: centrifugal, which is aligned with 'repulsion and dissolution of clusters, and to the individualization of the movement of bodies', and centripetal, connected to 'the heightening of collective sensation, an attractive, almost magnetic, or vortical force...that sucks bodies in toward its source' (*ibid*.: 11–12). Implicitly, then, these writers complicate Lefebvrian spatial theory by highlighting the ways that sound, as well as sight, can be a force of alienation and control.

In this article, I address these debates by following the production of social space through musical and sonic production during Other Campaign events in Mexico City, using ethnography to reflect upon Lefebvre's approach to urban space. I explore tensions between music and sound as forces which occupy and produce space, establish perceived 'rights' to urban space, communicate information and messages, and manipulate bodies in the 'political-cultural events' of pro-Zapatista groups in Mexico City. Specifically, I will establish that pro-Zapatista activists and musicians sought to use music as a means of dissemination of information to people passing

through public spaces such as parks and squares.[4] However, I will also demonstrate, following Johnson and Cloonan, that this aim occasionally drew a number of more ambiguous audio-social dynamics around musical performance, and will highlight ways in which claiming the right to urban space through sound became a contentious enterprise. I will develop this analysis by first providing an introduction to the Other Campaign concerts in Mexico City at which I conducted ethnographic research, emphasising how these events became organised around the goal of using music to 'disseminate' political messages. Second, I will describe and explore a number of episodes that revealed limits and contradictions pertaining to the ways these groups used music and sound to claim public space. In recent years, the rise of sound studies and critiques of the notion of musical 'autonomy' within music studies have raised important questions about the relationship between 'music' and 'sound' (Anderson *et al*. 2005). The aim of this article is not to address such debates on a theoretical level. Rather, focusing on music-making in an activist context, I explore how different ways of understanding the category 'music' may affect perceptions of the relationship between musical practice and urban space.

Researching the Other Campaign in Mexico City

In the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle in June 2005, the EZLN called for a 'national campaign for building another way of doing politics, for a program of national struggle on the

[4] In this article, I use the phrase 'public spaces' to refer to spaces created (usually by the State) for access by a general public, such as parks, pavements, streets, and squares. Here, 'public spaces' are opposed to 'private spaces': spaces not made accessible to a general public, or made accessible only upon certain conditions beyond obeisance to the law (for example, payment of a fee).

Left, and for a new Constitution', which involved 'alliances of non-electoral organizations' with leftist movements and came to be called the 'Other Campaign' (see Mora 2007). Although the Other Campaign was initially convened as an alternative to the national election campaign of 2006, it has persevered until the time of writing.[5] This project constitutes an example of what I suggest may be termed 'counter-hegemonic glocalization', in an adaptation of Evans' term 'counter-hegemonic globalization' (2000): the Other Campaign has sought to link together social, political and cultural struggles in different localities, while respecting the local nuances and particularities that shape these struggles.

During research in Mexico City between October 2012 and April 2013, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork with activist musicians performing as part of the Zapatistas' Other Campaign. Joining the Other Campaign meant publicly adhering to the principles of the EZLN's Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, including an anti-capitalist, anti-neoliberal globalization stance; opposition to the Mexican state; support for indigenous rights and the San Andrés Accords; a commitment to grassroots solutions 'from below' and opposition to 'agreements from above to be imposed below'; and a commitment 'to reciprocal respect for the autonomy and independence of organizations' (EZLN 2005). Other Campaign activist groups perceived a stark divide between mainstream electoral politics and their own grassroots politics, and distanced themselves from political parties of any persuasion.

These groups' supporters came from diverse backgrounds, but particular historical and ongoing experiences informed the political views of many. First, a number of older activists had been politically active prior to the 1994 uprising, especially in the student movement of the late

[5] Although it was renamed the 'Sexta' in early 2013, this article refers only to the Other Campaign for the sake of simplicity.

1960s, and some I spoke to had supported the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) after the end of the Somoza regime in 1979. Second, a large number of pro-Zapatista activists were students or alumni of universities in the city, and many had been involved in the 1999 student occupation of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), held in protest against an announced rise in tuition fees at the university. Third, many pro-Zapatista activists self-identified as *raperos* (rappers) and *grafiteros* (graffiti artists) within a hip-hop culture associated with the *barrios* (suburbs) on the outskirts of the Mexico City metropolis (incorporating both Distrito Federal and the surrounding Estado de México). These musicians and artists rooted their political views not in a past episode of repression, revolution or contention, but in the everyday oppression and injustice that they experienced in their own neighbourhoods. Given that many of these areas (especially those located in Estado de México) had suffered greatly at the hands of drug cartels, the political perspectives of many of these bands also incorporated a critique of the war on drugs; as the Chalco-based hip-hop group Re Crew rap on their track 'Chalco', *el gobierno y las ratas, es el mismo precipicio* ('the government and crime, it's the same abyss').

During my research, three Other Campaign groups were particularly active in Mexico City. First, Colectivo Azcapotzalco was a group located towards the north of Distrito Federal which carried out a number of pro-Zapatista awareness-raising activities including running a blog and monthly publication entitled 'La Voz del Anáhuac' and holding 'political-cultural events' featuring music, theatre and poetry in the bandstands of public parks in the north of the city. This group included several students, as well as older members who had been activists since prior to 1994. Coordinadora Valle de Chalco (henceforth CVDC), meanwhile, was a collective whose number included several young graffiti artists and rappers from Valle de Chalco, a

marginalised district of Estado de México.[6] This group, like Colectivo Azcapotzalco, put on political-cultural events in a variety of locations, and it also promoted a pro-Zapatista compilation album in 2012. Finally, Red Contra La Represión y Por La Solidaridad (henceforth RCRS) was a broad network of pro-Zapatista activists and collectives which was formed in Mexico City but extended across Mexico. It supported a range of activities, and was one of the principal organizers of Other Campaign events in the centre of the city. Of these three organizations, the latter was the most closely connected to the Zapatistas, having been established by the EZLN after the Foro Nacional Contra La Represión in 2007.[7] In practice, although most Other Campaign political-cultural events were officially organised by particular activist collectives, their members often collaborated to host events. Notably, music occupied a central place at these events; indeed, live musical performance was by far the most prevalent feature of the events I attended.

In Mexico City I went to around 20 Other Campaign events in public spaces, where I made field recordings, took pictures and recorded videos on my digital camera, wrote field notes, and made research contacts, especially with musicians. Often, this was tiring work, since events often started in the morning and continued until the mid-evening. Most important, however, was the way that my constant presence at these events and the relationships I developed with activists and musicians during my research tended to initiate me into the mentality of the groups that ran them, particularly in relation to the police. On one occasion, together with a number of Other Campaign activists, I attended a two-day rap event held in a walled-off street in Chalco (south-east of the Mexico City metropolitan area) which was targeted by riot police, and after a short

[6] I had worked in Valle de Chalco as a volunteer for four months in 2007.

[7] http://www.redcontralarepresion.org/contenido.php?cat=9&id=9 (accessed 5 April 2015).

time my companions urged me to make a hasty getaway.[8] Elsewhere, I was stopped and checked by armed police just before arriving at a little-attended Other Campaign event in Parque Revolución in north Mexico City, during which the police spent much time driving around the park with sirens blazing. Even had there been a reasonable pretext for this police activity, it was not apparent at the time. Moreover, pro-Zapatista groups provided a ready narrative into which to fit such occurrences: that there was a 'National Campaign of Repression' being waged by the government against all types of protest. This narrative became especially prominent after the events of 1 December 2012, when mass protests in Mexico City's historic centre against the inauguration of Enrique Peña Nieto as President ended in riots, a violent police crackdown, the arrests of dozens of protesters,[9] and a fatal injury to an activist called Francisco 'Kuykendall' Leal, who was struck in the head with an exploding gas canister and died over a year later.[10] The spectre of this conflict hung over my subsequent research in public spaces. I was, then, far from a disinterested observer at such events, but instead participated in an affective field that arose in the use and production of space for political purposes.

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[8] Police in riot gear moved to block the street off at both ends—with the apparent intention of forcibly removing participants in this event from the street—but I managed to leave before any violence occurred. In the end, the organizers of the event came to an agreement with the police and the event continued peacefully.

[9] See, for example, http://www.animalpolitico.com/2012/12/que-paso-el-1-de-diciembre-durante-la-toma-de-protesta-de-epn-fotos-videos/, http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=327615 and http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=327370 (all accessed 10 September 2014).

[10] http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/01/26/politica/011n1pol (accessed 10 September 2014).

Music, Message and Space

In October 2012, I attended an Other Campaign political-cultural event held in order to raise awareness of political prisoners in Mexico, on the terrace outside Palacio de Bellas Artes in the centre of Mexico City. At this event, the performance of one musician in particular seemed to condense some of the complex discourses surrounding music-making in this context. Luis Ángel Santiago was a singer-songwriter in his early 20s playing a variety of songs accompanied by guitar, including much *nueva trova* and *nueva canción*. He was, at this time, a relative unknown in this setting (even being introduced at this event by an incorrect name) but was to perform frequently at Other Campaign events after this point. Santiago started to set up and tune his guitar while the compere gave a short speech positioning musical performance within a Zapatista context ('we believe that culture and art are a fundamental part of the resistance'). Santiago received applause from a small handful of people in a sparse crowd, while visitors to Palacio de Bellas Artes wandered past, appearing to pay little attention.

Taking the floor while strumming his guitar gently, Santiago attempted to motivate the small crowd present to clap along ('I don't have a percussionist, so [it would be good] to liven this up...; the struggle is an act of love, so let's enjoy this as well'), to which a few responded. Then, he began to sing a song with an insistent 12/8 rhythm he had composed entitled 'La Buena Canción', which served to construct a position for his own music as faithful journalism. This song began by playing with the image of the penniless protest singer ('they've told me many times.... With your protest songs you'll die of hunger'), before mocking the style of the musical mainstream, as Santiago began to imitate love songs in an exaggerated nasal voice: '"My girlfriend left me"/"My boyfriend tricked me" and then "Baby, don't go off with anyone else, please"/Shit!'. Subsequently, its chorus went as follows:

No digo que esté mal	I'm not saying it's wrong

Pero hay más de que hablar	But there are other things to talk about
Gente en la calle	People on the street
Haciendo malabares	Juggling [that is, as a substitute for begging]
Niños muriendo por inanición	Children dying of starvation
Y no hay muchos que lo canten	And not many sing about it

(Luis Ángel Santiago, 'La Buena Canción')

Several recurring tendencies among Other Campaign musicianship in general are at play during this ethnographic vignette. The theme of transmission of political messages—in this case about the dire poverty experienced by a large proportion of Mexicans—underpinned, in an especially overt fashion, the song with which this singer opened his set. At the beginning of his performance, Santiago made an (in this case, only partly successful) attempt to draw those present into an interactive and pleasurable performer-audience relationship. In the manner in which it was written, however, this song was predicated on the notion of unidirectional communication of textual information about topics distinguished by their gravity, to audiences whose primary task was to listen. Santiago aimed to compose songs with clear, simple messages 'so that what I say may be understood...from a little girl up to the most intellectual of people'. While this notion of musical communication was built around the notion of non-discriminating 'broadcasting' with the potential to reach diverse elements of a (potentially) mass-scale audience (Peters 1999: 51–9), Other Campaign events were, in practice, small-scale affairs. Meanwhile, those features that could be seen to distinguish music—a sonic, participatory, affective medium—tended, as in this song, to be pushed to the margins by discourses privileging its value as a vehicle for political messages. (Indeed, these tensions were reflected in dissatisfaction on the part of this singer, who later became unhappy with the overly 'serious' mode of performance predominating at Other Campaign events.) One might well ask a question that I will hope to

address over the remainder of this article: why was music, rather than some other medium, being used at events such as this one?

Santiago's performance of songs as journalism corresponded to prevalent discourses among the activist groups with which I conducted research in Mexico City, all of which considered the communication of information and messages to be a high priority. On the website of RCRS, for example, the network's plan of action includes 'a permanent campaign of dissemination and propaganda'.[11] Meanwhile, a veteran of Colectivo Azcapotzalco told me that the purpose of his group's activities was 'to reach more people each time, so that more people would take the word [*palabra*] with them' (José, interview, 14 January 2013). A member of CVDC, a young *grafitero* from Chalco, emphasised to me that 'we believe the EZLN's struggle is important, we have to defend it; we have to disseminate [*difundir*]'. He stated that, while the Zapatistas typically asked for little, one thing they had requested was that their supporters 'spread the word':

> We perhaps do not have resources to attend a brigade [to visit the Zapatista communities], to send [the Zapatistas] money or to send them medicine, we are really screwed, here in the *barrio*. But we can disseminate. (Interview, CVDC, 24 July 2013)

For many Zapatista supporters, these activities were made necessary because of a so-called 'media siege' (*cerco mediático*) waged by powerful forces against the EZLN, ensuring that most people were either unaware of its continued existence or believed erroneous information about it

[11] http://redcontralarepresion.org/contenido.php?cat=9&id=9 (accessed 6 April 2015); 'Realizar una campaña permanente de difusión y propaganda'. It is important to note that in Spanish, as is certainly the case here, the word *propaganda* tends to lack the negative connotations associated with its English equivalent.

(José, interview, 14 January 2013; Luis Angel Santiago, interview, 29 October 2012). In response, Other Campaign activists felt obliged to ensure that reliable information about the Zapatistas and other movements of resistance within Mexico could reach the public, hence creating forms of 'alternative mediation' (Couldry 2000).

Despite pro-Zapatista actors' common commitment to 'spreading the word', 'the message' itself was varied. During my research, I attended Other Campaign political-cultural events that discussed a multiplicity of issues with links to Zapatismo. Often, events had specific themes—for instance, one event was arranged to celebrate Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) on the first and second of November, and became an opportunity to commemorate those that had died 'in the struggle [*lucha*]'. Another was organised in October 2012 to raise awareness about the existence of political prisoners in Mexico, and featured a live telephone interview with Alberto Patishtán, a Tzotzil-speaking teacher who was imprisoned for 11 years on what were later accepted to be false accusations of multiple homicide.[12] On 17 November of that year, an event was held to celebrate the anniversary of the creation of the EZLN in 1983, and on 22 December another was held to remember the victims of the Acteal massacre in Chenalhó,

[12] Patishtán was pardoned and freed in 2013, having been sentenced to 60 years in prison for an ambush in the Los Altos region of Chiapas that killed seven police officers, despite many witnesses stating that he had been teaching at the time of the ambush. In prison, Patishtán became part of the Other Campaign, and began to campaign for unjustly incarcerated prisoners; see http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2013/09/13/politica/006a1pol and http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-24741441 (both accessed 05 August 2014).

Chiapas, which had taken place on 22 December 1997.[13] During these events, Other Campaign groups would often emphasise that the Zapatista movement still existed, and that the Zapatistas were still struggling (*luchando*) in Chiapas. In addition, these groups disseminated messages about the disappeared women in Ciudad Juaréz (Staudt 2008), the indigenous self-defense organisations in Cherán, Michoacán, and the many political prisoners held by the Mexican State. Many of the non-Zapatista groups supported in these events were adherents of the Other Campaign themselves (for example, Las Abejas in Acteal and Patishtán).

The goal of dissemination of pro-Zapatista messages was reflected consistently in the ways that these activists altered the physical environment, constructing public parks and squares as sites for linear communication from activist to audience. Music, often accompanied by theatre and poetry, formed part of a complex matrix of media that worked together to encourage a one-way communicative dynamic. The physical layout of these events tended to vary little: rows of chairs were placed in front of the performing area (which was sometimes on top of a bandstand, sometimes under a marquee), marking out the event as a focus of attention; around these chairs various stalls would be set up to sell books, CDs, crafts and textiles, and distribute food and drink for a suggested donation in order to raise money either for the collective hosting the event or for other Zapatista-linked groups. Individual activists would walk around the space,

[13] On 22 December 1997, members of the paramilitary group Mascara Roja entered the village of Acteal and slaughtered 45 people, including 19 children. The victims were members of Las Abejas, a pacifist Catholic organization supportive of the EZLN. A United States embassy cable leaked in 2009 alleges that the Mexican government had directly supported paramilitary groups such as Mascara Roja after the Zapatista uprising; see http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB283/index.htm (accessed 5 August 2014).

distributing newspapers, booklets and flyers to passers-by. Behind these stalls, organisers would also lay out colourful art and banners carrying political messages. Particularly striking was the display created for the Día de los Muertos event held outside Palacio de Bellas Artes, which extended across the plaza and featured a seven-foot high rack of skulls, a ten-foot tall sculpture of the skeleton of Emiliano Zapata, and a number of *ofrendas* (offerings) made with flowers spelling out political slogans ('80,000 dead in Calderón's war'; 'In memory of our migrant brothers and sisters', and one featuring the name of each Zapatista *caracol* [cultural and administrative centres based in Chiapas]; see Figs. 1 and 2).

Figure 1: A *papier maché* skeleton of Emiliano Zapata outside Other Campaign Día de los Muertos event, November 2012
Source: photograph: Andrew Green

Figure 2: An *ofrenda* at Other Campaign Día de los Muertos event, November 2012
Source: photograph: Andrew Green

The format of these political-cultural events was also geared towards dissemination of text. Typically, at such events musical, poetical, theatrical or dance numbers were interspersed with short talks or speeches about the theme of the event given by organisers. In this setting, musicians tended to pursue one of two strategies—attract passers-by with music so that they would then find out more about the Zapatistas and the Other Campaign through textual media, or incorporate this discourse into their own music, at the risk of possibly compromising or undermining its attractive qualities. While some musical numbers did fulfil the former role—for

instance, outside Palacio de Bellas Artes activists sometimes performed instrumental music accompanied by dance—the majority of Other Campaign musicians I worked with perceived their music to constitute, in itself, a medium or vehicle for pro-Zapatista messages. As well as weaving into their music particular stories or principles that supported pro-Zapatista, anti-government narratives, these musicians often gave short speeches in the intervals between and during songs. Thus, at an event to commemorate the Acteal massacre in December 2012, Luis Ángel Santiago dedicated a song 'to our Zapatista brothers' and 'the memory of our brothers and sisters from Acteal' who were 'killed by paramilitaries supported by the damn government'. Santiago went on to sing a song in which he assumed the voice of an indigenous woman from Chiapas encouraging her husband to take over land owned by a foreign investor ('the struggle waits for nobody; there's plenty left to liberate'). These concerts were also frequently punctuated by cries of *¡Viva el EZLN!* (long live the EZLN!), *¡Viva Zapata!* (long live Zapata!) and *¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!* (the people united shall never be defeated)[14] among musicians and audience.

Such political-cultural events featured a variety of live music, including performances of rap, *trova*, ska, reggae soundsystem, and rock, as well as instrumental music to accompany dance and poetry. At Other Campaign events held on the square outside the Palacio de Bellas Artes, rap tended to predominate, followed by *trova*, whereas in the events put on in the north of the city by Colectivo Azcapotzalco I observed many performances of *trova* and rock. In some cases, such preferences were clearly related to the background of the organising group; events put on by CVDC, for example, often featured many rap artists with strong connections to the Chalco hip-hop scene, such as Re Crew, XCHM, To Cuic Libre and Instituto del Habla. More generally, the

[14] Notably, this chant has roots in the *nueva canción* movement (Morris 2014: 42).

predominance of rap and *trova* at these events reflects Baker's observation in the context of Cuba that these genres, as 'text- or intellect-centered musics', fit more comfortably into the political discourse of revolution than 'body centered genres' such as reggaetón (2005: 392).

Importantly, the audiences at these events were also varied. On the one hand, Other Campaign groups often advertised events online, especially via social media such as Facebook and Twitter, attracting small audiences of individuals with existing sympathies towards Zapatismo. On the other hand, the 'imagined audiences' (Litt 2012) for these events also included passers-by, present in these public spaces for innumerable reasons, some of whom stopped and began to engage with the music, but the majority of whom did not. These audiences varied according to context. The municipal parks at which Colectivo Azcapotzalco put on monthly events, which included Parque Revolución and Parque de la China, tended to attract Mexicans, especially couples enjoying a romantic walk, friends having a day out, or parents taking their children to visit their local playground. These parks were full of trees and greenery, and each featured benches scattered around numerous walkways and a bandstand located in the centre. Meanwhile, as briefly discussed above, Palacio de Bellas Artes was a commonly-visited museum, theatre and architectural landmark located in the historic centre of Mexico City, on a route of tourist attractions including the nearby park La Alameda and the city's Zócalo ('main square'). The cultural events this institution put on attracted many middle- and upper-class Mexicans; equally, many visitors to this space were foreign tourists, and less likely to speak Spanish fluently or be engaged in Mexican politics (see further Gallo 2007: 170). For many individuals, Mexican and otherwise, this venue also served as a convenient meeting-place. In part, then, these venues were chosen because they were highly visible, and gave Other Campaign

groups the opportunity to communicate to audiences likely to be unfamiliar with their brand of politics.

The music performed at Other Campaign events lent these public spaces a particular sonic character, and often gained attention from passers-by as a curiosity or an acoustic presence, rather than as a source of information. At various Colectivo Azcapotzalco events in parks in north Mexico City, I noted that while the audience located in the seating area was typically small, more people would be seated on the benches scattered around the park, often close enough to hear the amplified sound emanating from the bandstand, but too far away to understand what this collective's activists and musicians were saying or singing. In several conversations I had with some of these people, none professed to understand the purpose of this event. Such lack of comprehension was also related to the low quality of the sound produced by these collectives' equipment. As a result, the live music performed at these events often sounded highly distorted and rough. Carlos Xeneke, a singer-songwriter and veteran pro-Zapatista activist, told me that at Other Campaign events 'there are lots of problems with the audio, almost always.... Myself, with 25 years playing music, every time I go and play it's like "what equipment is there", [I see] that there'll be poor-quality sound'. Technical limitations made performances by larger ensembles, such as rock or ska bands, more difficult to put on. While larger ensembles, such as rock, salsa, and cumbia groups, tended to take a long time to set up, and their sound was difficult to manage, setting up for a rap or *trova* group was comparatively simple. Nonetheless, the dominant genres of rap and *trova* were also undermined by this scenario, since the messages by which they were apportioned value were distorted by the poor-quality equipment that transmitted them.

Musicians performing at Other Campaign events tended to respond to such technical limitations with a mixture of frustration and humour, and contextualise them as setbacks typical

of subversive endeavour. At an event celebrating Día de los Muertos outside Bellas Artes, the performance of El Chava, a middle-aged amateur *trova* singer and biologist, was beset by technical problems from the beginning; his microphone was transmitting a level of static noise, and short bursts of feedback punctuated his singing. El Chava persisted, adding humour to proceedings; when asked to help the organisers to check microphone levels between songs, he replaced the typical mic-check *bueno* (well, good) with *malo* (bad). In an interview, a member of Cienpies, a ska band from north-east Mexico City that often played at Other Campaign events, told me that they would not usually tolerate such performing conditions were they to be found at commercial, for-profit concerts. However, for this band, events under the 'Other Campaign' umbrella entailed a greater spirit of co-operation whereby musicians' efforts were framed as co-contributions to a larger cause, rather than commodities exploited by capitalists (interview, 19 November 2012). Some activists, echoing Zapatista figurehead Subcomandante Marcos (2007), perceived these technical problems to be intertwined with an authentic, grassroots 'culture from below' that contrasted with a false, imposed 'culture from above'. A member of CVDC told me that at an early stage they had been organising events 'in the street' without amplification, stating that 'culture from below requires neither big stages, nor big audio' (interview, 24 July 2013).

A number of goals and strategies, then, competed in this setting. Other Campaign events in Mexico City were organised around the goal of 'dissemination' of information and narratives associated with Zapatismo, which underpinned these groups' use of music in public spaces. This objective could be perceived in the way these groups produced communicative space, altering the physical environment and creating a variety of modalities through which passers-by could encounter information and narratives supporting a pro-Zapatista perspective. To return to Lefebvre, Other Campaign collectives often cultivated an ambivalent relationship to the 'abstract

spaces' in which they had chosen to operate. On the one hand, the introduction of colour, noise and polemical voices into public spaces threatened to break down the supposed 'neutrality' which these spaces maintained (Lefebvre 1991: 56). Nevertheless, this was far from a consensual process, and the notion of communication that Other Campaign musicians tended to privilege was unidirectional and hierarchical—itself predicated, therefore, on social distance. Most notably, the enterprise of dissemination through music favoured the textual aspects of musical performance. That is, musicians tended to emphasise the transformative effects that contact with revolutionary messages contained within music could have upon their audiences; meanwhile, fewer musicians among such groups conceptualised music as a force which centripetally drew in audiences to discover information through other textual means. Nonetheless, as I show in the following section, listening to the sound produced during Other Campaign events rather than reading the texts they disseminated, as Lefebvre advocates (1996: 109), allows new critiques of this philosopher's declared 'right' to urban space to be conceived. This, in turn, may help us to situate the place of musical and sonic practice at these events.

Contesting Public Spaces

Although the majority of these political-cultural events ran smoothly, a number of episodes that occurred during my research appeared to demonstrate the fragility of Other Campaign groups' claims to public space. During these moments, these groups deployed a discourse of rights which, while ostensibly reinforcing access to this space for 'the people' in general, failed to differentiate between different 'publics' with legitimate competing claims on the same public spaces.

In April 2013, I went to Parque de la China in the north of Mexico City to observe an event held by Colectivo Azcapotzalco. When I arrived, the group's awareness-raising event had begun: a speaker was talking on the stage in front of the bandstand, telling politically themed stories to a crowd comprising a small handful of people. By the side of the seating area there stood a group of middle-aged men and women wearing t-shirts with the name of the local PRD *delegación* (borough) with *diputado* (democratic representative) printed onto the back. Soon after I arrived, the organisers of the event became embroiled in an argument at the side of the bandstand with a leader of this group, and a nearby police officer arrived to mediate the conflict. It became apparent that the local PRD had organised an activity for Día del Niño (Day of the Child) at the same time as that of Colectivo Azcapotzalco. After a short time, the PRD supporters retired to the edge of the park, where they held a makeshift event.

In interviews, members of Colectivo Azcapotzalco alleged to me that on many occasions that they organised political-cultural events, members of the local PRD had attempted to impede it by arranging an event at the same time and taking the space first. They described instances in which they had arrived to a park to find PRD-affiliated groups already occupying the bandstand, forcing them to relocate. These groups, they told me, organised such activities solely to deny them access to this public space. In response to this perceived campaign against them, the activist collective had changed strategy, distributing flyers containing event details in the *delegación* in which it was to take place only one day in advance. Nonetheless, even when they did arrive early enough to claim the space, members of the collective told me that such groups would sometimes threaten to summon the police in order to dislodge them by force (interviews, Horacio, 2 May 2013; José, 14 January 2013).

One crucial issue lay beneath the surface of this encounter. Generally, Other Campaign groups refused to participate in the regime of permits through which the government apportioned public space. The government of Distrito Federal requires those seeking to put on events of an 'artistic, musical, sporting, cinematographic, theatrical or cultural' nature in 'public roads, parks or public spaces' to seek a permit from the local *delegación*.[15] Applying for a permit involves six steps: visiting the *delegación* office to enquire about the necessary documentation; leaving and returning with such documentation; registering a request; returning within five days with further required documentation; waiting for the *delegación* to make a decision; finally, the applicant attends an appointment to hear the result of this decision. While this long, bureaucratic process could prove frustrating for any group putting on regular events in public spaces, Other Campaign groups' ideological opposition to the Mexican state further complicated matters. A well-known quotation attributed to Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos is 'we do not need permission to be free'. The word here translated 'permission' is *permiso*, which can also mean 'permit'. Members of Colectivo Azcapotzalco sometimes made reference to this phrase as they introduced their events to a wider public, openly declaring that these events were occurring without *permiso*. One member of this group elaborated:

> We never request the spaces, be it to the *delegación* or anyone else. We don't have to ask them for permission [*permiso*]; permission to occupy spaces, spaces which belong to the people, the people have a right to use them. (Interview, 2 May 2013)

[15] See http://www.tramitesyservicios.df.gob.mx/wb/TyS/autorizacion_para_la_presentacion_de_espectaculos_ (accessed 21 October 2014).

Another member of this collective appealed to their constitutional rights in defence of their right to hold such events:

> The permit was signed with the blood of the people in the Constitution...if you read articles six to nine, they express the freedoms of assembly, of expression, of demonstration and of the press.[16] So you can't come...to try and superimpose a regulation on top of the Constitution, a secondary law, we won't allow it. (Interview, 14 January 2013)

Beyond access to public space in practice, then, this group appeared to be concerned with such access in *principle*. Invoking the Mexican Constitution, however, held great rhetorical power and allowed Colectivo Azcapotzalco to portray themselves as defenders of the rights afforded to them as citizens of Mexico, which they perceived to be under threat by the local government's regime of permits.

Similar issues regarding the distribution of space also arose at an event organised by RCRS in December 2012 to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Acteal massacre on the plaza outside the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Early in the day, the organisers of this event were approached by a member of the Bellas Artes staff who asked that proceedings be stopped, citing orders from his boss. In response, the organisers protested that this was a cultural event and that they were not obstructing the high volume of passing tourists or blocking the street. On the contrary, they stated that 'we are giving information to the people of Mexico, those that were passing by, and

[16] Article Nine states that '[t]he right to assemble or associate peaceably for any lawful purpose cannot be restricted; but only citizens of the Republic may do so to take part in the political affairs of the country.... No meeting or assembly shall be deemed unlawful which has for its object the petitioning of any authority or the presentation of a protest against any act; nor may it be dissolved, unless insults be proffered against said authority or violence is resorted to...'.

we are trying to culturally express our demands in a peaceful and civil manner'. The worker left, but returned soon after, stating that the collective had been using electricity paid for by Palacio de Bellas Artes and demanding that they stop doing so. The event's organisers acquiesced and cut off the electricity, interrupting the performance of Carlos Xeneke, a musician whose routine mixed songs of various genres with humour. Xeneke finished the song he was singing without amplification, and an organiser addressed the crowd, explaining what had happened. They decided to rent an electricity generator, which arrived about thirty minutes later.

The organisers of this event, like Colectivo Azcapotzalco, were disinclined to approach the local government for a permit to put on political-cultural events in public spaces, as the following quote shows:

> When people put on a street event they [government officials] ask you for a permit. Although it may be a cultural event, artistic, even for children...they ask for a permit to present a piece of street theatre. It's ridiculous. Obviously we always turn around and say 'ah, well we haven't got one', but what do they want us to do? I'll leave if they want, and won't do the theatre, but what can I do? ...tell me where there's a theatre here in the municipality to put on a theatrical work, there isn't one! (Interview, 24 July 2014)

In their use of public parks and squares, Other Campaign groups tended to follow a broad strategy of occupying space first and explaining the occupation later. Once events were established as 'cultural' and 'non-violent', they were difficult to remove, especially in a space like the square outside Palacio de Bellas Artes. While the latter venue was partly chosen because of its acoustics (which were favourable in comparison to the nearby Zócalo, a square so large that sound produced within it tended to dissipate quickly), there were also important strategic factors to consider. RCRS had a contact linked to Bellas Artes' workers' union:

> In Bellas Artes, it's a public space, we know the union for INBA [Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes], which belongs to the zone, so there's...an announcement from their union that the plaza will be occupied by an artistic event, and as it is a union that has to do with art and culture in our country, here they can't tell you 'no', because it's an artistic event. (Interview, 24 July 2013)

This appeal to 'art' allowed Other Campaign groups to claim a public space in which the promulgation of 'culture' and 'art' was highly valued.[17] Furthermore, Other Campaign activists responded to the security worker's request that their event be stopped by alluding to a 'non-violence' rooted in a concept of physicality from which sound was apparently excluded. Importantly, this appeal worked; the guard backed down, and returned with an objection that these activists were stealing a physical resource [electricity] from Palacio de Bellas Artes. Despite its conflictive nature, then, this exchange nonetheless served to reinforce ground rules among both parties in disagreement establishing a bifurcation between 'music', 'sound' or 'culture', and physical objects or resources that could obstruct, be owned and stolen, and be used in acts of violence or uncivility.

CVDC's encounter with the security guard, then, was grounded in a discourse distinguishing 'artistic' practices such as music from 'non-peaceful' or 'non-civil' activity. (Indeed, activists' not infrequent efforts to publicly foreground the status of musical performances as examples of 'art' and 'culture'—especially during events outside the Palacio de Bellas Artes, as in the case of the ethnographic vignette given at the beginning of the previous section—may be understood in this light.) The tendency, in this instance, not to discuss 'sound'

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[17] In this regard, it may be significant that discourses of 'culture' held less power in the case of Colectivo Azcapotzalco above, since they were competing with a local government group also planning to host a cultural event.

as a material force contrasted with the ways that Other Campaign groups used sound in relation to space. For instance (as already pointed out), some Other Campaign musicians used their performances to attract people into an area in which they would discover more information about specific causes. It was also clear from my field research that sound was an important means of creating an affective claim to space. The following is an excerpt from an interview with an organiser who worked with CVDC and RCRS:

> We arrive covered, protected by various organisations and collectives. Many of us arrive, not just three or four people to put up a 30m marquee: we set up the audio; the audio available is always very low-quality, but that's how it's done. (Interview, 24 July 2013)

Other Campaign groups had a sonically rooted strategy for establishing themselves within public space: after an aural presence was established, they could pit the principle of public access to 'culture' against the local government's regime of permits, manoeuvring the path of least resistance in their favour. Indeed, some sonic activities at Other Campaign political-cultural events appeared particularly directed towards reclaiming and resignifying space. Chalco-based rap group Re Crew would perform a special ritual at Other Campaign events intended to sanctify the performance space; enjoining the crowd to salute with them the 'seven paths of Mother Earth' ('put your fists up in the air, if you don't it's because you haven't washed'), the band would turn to the east, west, north, south, the sky, the earth, and the heart, hailing each path by blowing into a conch shell. As well as the fact that this act in itself constructed a particular spatial order, Re Crew characterised it as a gesture to 'ask permission' from Mother Earth before that their set, and proceedings in general, could continue. That is, at events in public space occurring without the permission of the authorities, Re Crew used a sonically rooted ritual to consecrate proceedings before a powerful metaphysical entity, thus establishing an alternative source of legitimacy within urban space.

There was good reason, then, to closely analyse musical performance as a conveyor of 'sound' as an affective and material presence at Other Campaign events, as well as a means for the dissemination of messages of support for the Zapatistas. However, partly because the rationale for political-cultural events highly privileged the textual, to consider the sonic dynamics presented at such events may be to understand their effects in more ambiguous terms. Goodman describes two categories of 'audiosocial force', centripetal and attractive, or centrifugal and repulsive, both of which act to manipulate and control human behaviour in space (2010: 10–11). As already seen, corresponding to Goodman's notion of centripetal audiosocial forces, many activists characterised music as a pull factor that would attract the public into an environment in which they could find out about the Zapatista struggle through a variety of media. This strategy often worked to an extent; small, curious audiences frequently approached the performing area after musicians began to perform. Equally, I also witnessed a centrifugal push factor at play, and the interplay between these two sonic forces was often intricately balanced. After the electricity was cut off during the event at Bellas Artes in December 2012, singer Carlos Xeneke's performance actually attracted a larger audience, even though his music now filled a much smaller space. There were many potential reasons for this, such as sympathy for the singer's misfortune, or the greater attention drawn to his performance as the sound was cut. Nonetheless, this occurrence formed part of a broader trend: pared-down, non-amplified features at these events (typically, but not always, street theatre) usually attracted the largest audiences.

The comparative popularity of purely acoustic events suggested that activist groups were often unintentionally cultivating centrifugal dynamics of sonic repulsion during Other Campaign events. One weekday at the beginning of November 2012, a small group of Other Campaign

activists from various collectives arrived at lunchtime to UAM-Azcapotzalco (a public university in the north of the city), quickly set up a sound system consisting of one speaker and one microphone, and began to broadcast pro-Zapatista discourse and songs towards the square in the centre of the university campus. Soon realising that few students were occupying this space, they turned their amplification equipment around and began to direct sound towards the long queue that had formed outside the university cafeteria, attempting to inform those present about recent paramilitary attacks on Zapatista communities in Chiapas. This was followed by an abortive attempt to perform music and a bid to foster dialogue with those in the queue by asking whether anyone had any questions, to which they received no response. It was often difficult to understand what this group was saying and singing due to the poor quality of the sound equipment they used; further, they were beset by technical failures, having to play recorded rather than live music due to microphone problems, and at several points broadcasting uncomfortable feedback across the square. Meanwhile, most of the students in the slow-moving queue continued to talk to one another despite the distorted sound that was being directed towards them. After this episode, I began to feel that it was inappropriate to characterise the group's interventions into space in terms of dissemination of discourse. Equally, taking a sonic perspective would appear to reveal very different power dynamics to those generally considered by Other Campaign actors. Although the students present may or may not have been sympathetic to this group's cause, this sound was still unidirectionally imposed upon them by a group armed with powerful, if faulty, amplification equipment.

In addition, Other Campaign groups' sonic appropriation of space sometimes caused conflict with other civil society groups. At the first Colectivo Azcapotzalco event that I attended, at Parque Revolución on a Sunday in October 2012, a group of about 20 people had gathered

together to play *son jarocho* as a pastime on the edge of the park.[18] In a conversation, one participant complained to me that they usually played *son jarocho* on the bandstand on Sundays, but when they arrived that morning this space had already been occupied by the activist collective, forcing them out to the margins. Each Sunday at Parque de la China, a guitar instructor gave classes to small groups of students on the bandstand located just behind the stage where Colectivo Azcapotzalco put on their events. (This instructor was sympathetic to the Zapatista cause and on good terms with the members of this activist group, having been using the bandstand for ten years.) Finally, every two weeks throughout the time of my research a few women from the local area would book the stage at Parque de la China to tell stories to groups of children. When I spoke to them in June 2015, they stated that they had long been used to the fact that Colectivo Azcapotzalco would occupy the stage before their arrival, and did not dispute their claim to this space (interview, 28 June 2015). On these occasions, competing claims on public space were expressed acoustically and the parks were filled with cacophonous sound. However, if these conflictive encounters can be characterised as low-level 'sonic warfare' (Goodman 2010), there was only one winner: the activists' amplification equipment allowed them to broadcast musical performances with far greater force than the acoustic equipment generally available to their competitors.

The conflictive episodes described here cannot be seen as representative of the kinds of dynamics and power relations witnessed at Other Campaign events in general; the activists and musicians with whom I conducted research frequently co-operated, in a cordial way, with other actors using the same public spaces without encountering difficulties. Nonetheless, these

[18] *Son jarocho* is a genre of folk song from the state of Veracruz in south-east Mexico, usually played with an ensemble including (at least) a *jarana* and *requinto jarocho*.

episodes revealed, in different ways, limits to the language of 'constitutional rights' that these activist groups invoked in order to gain access to space (see further, Douzinas, 2002; Speed 2006: 67; Waldron 1993). Considering music as a means of expressing discourse, rather than a sonic force or presence, allowed Other Campaign groups to simultaneously claim public spaces proactively through sonic practice and insist on constitutional protections for such activity under the category of 'freedom of expression'. However, to exploit such a slippage between commonly accepted discourse and strategic praxis was also to fail to recognise ways in which different groups' respective freedoms to express sound could come into conflict with one another, due to the material and spatial nature of sound itself. The ways that Other Campaign groups used sound to proactively claim public spaces revealed, upon occasion, the potential for sonic reproduction of social distance, and sometimes presented an obstacle for the equitable distribution of access to these spaces.

Conclusion

In this article, I have provided an ethnographic account of 'political-cultural events' put on by Other Campaign groups in public spaces in Mexico City for the dissemination of information about the Zapatista movement and a number of causes related to it. I have foregrounded the way that Other Campaign activities in these spaces were consciously structured around a linear communicative goal, with regard to space, text and sound. In this setting, the performance of music was understood to fulfil two strategic roles which occasionally conflicted with one another: as a vehicle for the direct dissemination of (textual) discourse, or an attractive force, drawing passers-by into a space full of other textual media, such as leaflets and flyers. It is the tension between these two understandings of music's role at these political-cultural events and,

more broadly, between two different ontologies of music relevant in this context—music as a vehicle for communicating messages, and music as a sonic event—which is explored in this article as it relates to questions of spatial conflict and rights. In discussing a number of occasions during which limits to these groups' claims on public space were revealed, this article explores how conflicts over public space were rooted in this tension.

Discourses about sonic media such as music often fail to account for the physicality of sound and the concomitant incongruity of discussing such media in terms of 'rights' and 'freedoms' which tend to presuppose the possibility for universal enfranchisement. I argue that, upon occasion, Other Campaign groups strategically exploited this gap.[19] Ultimately, it is important to take a long-term perspective: this strategy helped to maintain access to public spaces over time, and this access also aided Other Campaign groups' ability to organise as part of a civil society response to crises, such as that presented by the forced disappearance of 43 students by elements of the Mexican police near the town of Iguala, Guerrero in September 2014.[20] (This response was exemplified by an event organized by Colectivo Azcapotzalco in

[19] From a certain perspective, this situation reflects Butler's observation regarding freedom of speech in the United States: 'if 'speech'...can be fully subsumed under conduct, then the first Amendment is circumvented' (1996: 23).

[20] See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/07/mexico-missing-students-ayotzinapa-case-review-dump-fire and http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-missing-forty-three-the-governments-case-collapses (both accessed 19 July 2016). In the wake of September 2014, Other Campaign groups organised their own events in support of the missing students, and also collaborated with other activist groups to put on larger events. This mass kidnapping was taken by many as evidence that the Mexican government was behind much of the violence in the

June 2015 which featured an affecting and impassioned speech by a father of one of the disappeared students.) Furthermore, these activists were building upon the efforts of previous pro-Zapatista groups, such as those discussed in the introduction to this article, to claim public spaces that had been historically denied to them. In this sense, while one may highlight local episodes of low-level conflict, it may be argued that these groups' work, over time, to ensure that public spaces retained an association with radical politics helped to lay the ground for later, larger-scale activism in the same spaces. That is, this was a struggle that it was important to win.

Although these events were held for the purposes of dissemination of messages, they were involved with a complex chain of social and power relations whose effects reached far beyond a one-way linear communicative dynamic. In this setting, pro-Zapatista actors manoeuvred within a multifaceted array of cultural, social, political and legal tropes in order to achieve their aims. The research presented here simultaneously reveals the contradictions and the importance of the 'abstract space' which Lefebvre critiques. On the one hand, the threat of police violence often accompanied conflicts over space in this setting, suggesting a less peaceful underbelly to the tranquil veneer of the public parks and squares in which Other Campaign political-cultural events were held. On the other, the production of these spaces as 'abstract' also had positive effects. Conflicts helped nobody and were theoretically avoidable; further, such spaces *did* need to be shared, since multiple civil society and political groups could legitimately claim to use them. Indeed, even if Other Campaign groups' (not implausible) allegations regarding the local government's manoeuvre to deny them access to public spaces were true, it seemed clear that by isolating themselves from existing frameworks for the management of

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country—especially since, even within the dubious official narratives of the event, police acted in cahoots with a local drug cartel.

public spaces, these groups often made sharing them more difficult. The most challenging question posed by such conflictive encounters, then, concerned the equitable, fair or legitimate distribution of public space, and the (sonic) limitations of discourses emphasising the 'right to the city'.

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